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ABSTRACT

One college language teacher recounts her personal experience of the transition from graduate student in French studies to the only full-time language faculty member at a small pre-professional college, focusing on the ways in which she was underprepared for the work expected of her. Despite substantial language teacher training and experience abroad, her qualifications did not match the needs of professionally-oriented students. Difficulties encountered in meeting those needs and expectations include: lack of student motivation to study beyond the language requirement; having to develop a foreign language program from the ground up in an organization unfamiliar with language education; and the time taken from progress toward personal professional goals to meet immediate curriculum development needs. Factors supporting success in this endeavor include: administration acknowledgement of the need for professional support; the assistance of mentors in the language teaching profession; scheduling designed to promote communication among faculty; availability of professional resources for curriculum development; and innovative teaching techniques. Ongoing improvements include further development of college instructional resources and extension of program offerings to include a foreign language minor. (MSE)

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ED 391 388

"Taking the Foreign Out of Foreign Languages for Pre-Professional Students"

By

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"None of us was prepared to deal with the difference between our training and our actual work, teaching French." - Alice Kaplan, French Lessons: A Memoir.[1]

Foreign languages have become more important in the curricula of American colleges and universities as greater emphasis has been placed upon the global environment. Learning a foreign language provides an effective method for introducing and sensitizing students to international and intercultural issues. But are today's graduate programs adequately training its doctoral students in foreign language pedagogy in order to meet the demands of current academic trends? Or is the main focus of these programs still on literature and critical theory? Most graduates strive to teach literature. However, the realities of the job market now demand that recent Ph.D.'s be prepared to teach the non-traditional foreign language student: students who will not major, or maybe not even minor, in a foreign language and need to learn the language for practical purposes to enhance career objectives. What follows is a personal account of the difficult but often rewarding transition I underwent from being a graduate student in French Studies at Brown University to being the only full time foreign language faculty member at a small pre-professional college.

As a grant recipient and participant in the 1994-1995 American Council on Education and National Endowment for the Humanities Project: "Spreading the Word: Improving Foreign Language Instruction in Colleges and Universities," I was required to give a final presentation on what I had been able to achieved through my participation in the project. It was after this presentation that Dorothy James of Hunter College, a mentor of the above cited project, asked me to be a part of the 1995 MLA session entitled: "Are We Prepared to Teach the Non-Traditional Foreign Language Student." She also encouraged me to publish my account so as many people as possible would benefit from my experience.

I completed my doctorate in September of 1992 and then immediately left for Lyon to be a visiting lecturer in English for the academic year at the Université Lumière Lyon 2 and at the Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3. Initially intended to help me perfect my French, the year proved to be an invaluable experience for me as I worked to cultivate my teaching skills. My doctorate was based on twentieth century French literature not on teaching English. Even though I was exceptionally armed with three summers of experience of teaching English as a Second Language at Phillips-Andover and Northfield Mount Hermon schools, where I had worked with excellent master teachers and colleagues, I was not prepared to teach in Lyon. I was not prepared for students who had professionally oriented career goals. At Brown, Phillips-Andover, and Northfield Mount Hermon, I had been spoiled by students whose main goal was to learn French or English. Truly, they were gifted language learners and were interested in learning

languages for the love of learning languages. I relished in the environment of being able to share with them my love for learning languages. But my training at Brown had not prepared me for the type of teaching I was required to do in Lyon. In Lyon, I had to learn what aspects of English the business, law, history, and geography students needed to know in order to succeed in their chosen careers. To say that my year in Lyon was an incredible and culturally rewarding learning experience for me is a major understatement. I spent a good portion of my year in Lyon observing other teachers and learning from their techniques.

Knowing that I only had one year in Lyon, I prepared for job interviews at the 1992 MLA convention in New York City. My dream was to obtain a tenure track position at a small liberal arts college similar to Middlebury College where I had done my undergraduate studies. Yet, I knew the job market was tough and I was looking at all possible French positions across the United States. Although I was truly enjoying my year in Lyon and had been offered the opportunity for a second one-year contract, I was anxious to begin my career as a professor of French literature in the United States. I knew I would have to teach introductory language courses but I was excited about teaching an introductory literature course that stemmed from my graduate training. After fourteen convention interviews and five on-campus interviews, I decided that the best position for me was at the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science (PCT&S).

However, as with Lyon, I was not prepared to teach PCT&S's students who had professionally oriented career goals.

Furthermore, I was to coordinate and develop the school's newly formed foreign language program. PCT&S is known for its curriculum development, in particular for its programs that support connections between liberal and professional faculty and for its creation of a liberal professional curriculum, all of which have been supported by a FIPSE grant. PCT&S is an exciting place to work with a very committed group of supportive people with wonderful intentions. Unfortunately, what I didn't properly estimate was the true difficulty of the task that laid before me. In short, I am isolated from other foreign language specialists and I am involved in administrative and teaching tasks that I did not receive training for while I was in graduate school. I am not teaching French literature and I must rely on the services of interlibrary loan in order to attempt to do any type of research. Furthermore, like my year in Lyon, the majority of my students at PCT&S are fulfilling a foreign language requirement and many lack the desire to go beyond the requirement. How I strive to foster their interest.

My colleagues in the School of General Studies and the college's administration want and need the foreign language program to work. Yet, they are not foreign language specialists and therefore my struggles are not just in the classroom. They have given me a tight time frame in which to develop the program and I am on my own. For example, some faculty advised their students to take a semester of French I and a semester of Spanish I so as to be able to study abroad in both France and Spain. These faculty members had no idea of the class contact time and

effort needed to become moderately proficient in a foreign language. To say that I would be able to make students proficient after a fourteen week semester of a class that only meets three times a week was incomprehensible. Luckily, I had worked with Judith Liskin-Gasparro while at Middlebury College on oral proficiency interview techniques and had some basic groundwork for presenting ACTFL proficiency guidelines to my colleagues. But once again, the training I had received from Liskin-Gasparro was an exception to the norm. Furthermore, one of my first tasks at PCT&S was to develop a system for placement examinations. Without the help of Joan Grenier-Winther of Washington State University, I would have been at a complete loss. Joan provided me with information on how the examinations were run at her school and most importantly, what the pitfalls could be.

To my school's and college administration's credit, they are aware of just how isolated I am from colleagues in my field. Therefore, they fully support my participation at conferences and workshops. These conferences and workshops are my means of survival. Always carrying a ready supply of business cards and forever prepared to ask a multitude of questions, I network to build relations with other schools. But while I have learned to network creatively, I lose precious time on my literary research and I must battle with the fear that I get farther and farther away from my original career goals as each day passes. However, I also recognize the need for my work as American colleges and universities move towards internationalizing their curricula and

although my primary research had been literary, significant new goals have evolved for me.

My second big means of survival was the "Spreading the Word" project. I applied to be a part of this project in November of 1993 and in February of 1994, I began to work with my two mentors, Jane Harper and Madeleine Lively of Tarrant County Junior College. Their help was the most instrumental component in the development of PCT&S 's foreign language program. Their experience and guidance was what I needed most, especially when it came to curriculum development. I needed their prestigious reputations to back me up and to prove that even though I was only a junior professor, I actually did know what I was talking about and that I was serious about how the foreign language program was to be developed. For example, with Jane's and Madeleine's help, I was able to convince the college's curriculum committee that in order to fulfill the college's foreign language requirement, a student should not be allowed to take two different beginning level languages. That is to say, if a student wishes to attain a desirable level of oral proficiency, they are advised to take a sequence of two levels of the same language. However, if a student is not a talented language learner, s/he still has the option to take one semester of a foreign language and an Area Studies course.[2]

Even before I received the help of Jane and Madeleine, I knew that if I was going to get the foreign language program to work, I was going to have to be consistent, persistent, and organized. Before I arrive at PCT&S, the school had previously offered pilot

courses in French I and Spanish I. When I arrive at PCT&S in the fall of 1993, I was immediately responsible for coordinating a team of adjunct faculty that would offer courses in French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish. The first thing that I did was to invite all the adjunct faculty to my apartment for a pot luck supper so that we could all get to know each other. At this dinner, we discussed what we saw as necessary for a foreign language syllabus. Realizing that the majority of my faculty were native speakers with little or no training, I knew that I was going to have to imposed certain elements of the syllabus (see appendix 2). For example, I introduced my adjunct faculty to the idea of in-class and out-of-class journals, the importance of computer and video materials, oral as well as written exams, weekly group skits, objective grading forms and a standardized grading policy. I must admit that it took me three semesters to form a team that knew what ACTFL and oral proficiency guidelines were and how to adapt our courses to be professionally oriented. I continue to have pot luck dinners once a month with my adjunct faculty so as to facilitate communication among all the instructors who have very different teaching schedules. I have also asked the registrar to sandwich my classes among the adjuncts' classes so that I see them for at least ten minutes everyday as we cross paths between classes.

ACTFL and oral proficiency guidelines were the easy part of my job. I had the help of Judith Liskin-Gasparro and the help of my ACE/NEH mentors Jane Harper and Madeleine Lively. My problem was how to construct professionally oriented foreign language

courses. While I was in graduate school, I was mainly trained to teach literature. I had had only one course in methodology and had been part of a supervised team of teaching assistants for three semesters. My junior year in Paris, my senior winter term in Guanajuato, Mexico, and my teaching year in Lyon had provided me with culture and civilization material. But how was I to teach a French or Spanish course for international business majors? How was I to develop the content materials for the German, Japanese, and Italian courses? Yes, I had minored in mathematics at Middlebury, but I didn't know the first thing about the differences, for example, between corporate structure in the United States and in France. I first turned to the Cultural Services of the French Embassy for help. From them, I learned about the Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBER), located at various American universities, and the French for Business and International Trade newsletter, edited by Maurice Elton at Southern Methodist University. From just these two sources alone, I was able to find out about and receive two scholarships. The first enabled me to attend the special training program, "Enseignement du Français des Affaires" at the Centre International d'Études de Langues à Strasbourg during the summer of 1994. The second enabled me to participate in "Formation à Distance en Français de la Gestion et du Commerce" from September 1994 to May 1995. The knowledge that I acquired via these two scholarships enabled me to become much more at ease in teaching my students. There is nothing worse than to be in a position of the teacher who knows the foreign language but does

not understand the content material that the students need to learn. Furthermore, these two programs showed me how to seek out similar materials for the other foreign languages that my program offers. For example, I now know how to work closely with publishing companies on finding text-specific computer software and culturally authentic materials.

Finally, I have worked very hard to have my students exposed as much as possible to the foreign language outside of the classroom. Foreign language classes only meet three times a week and each class period is only fifty minutes. For example, several foreign movies have been purchased and are currently in the school's audio visual center. Students wishing to earn extra credits points watch a movie and then make an appointment to meet with their professor in order to have a twenty minute to a half hour discussion in the target language about the movie. At all levels, students are provided with study guides while they watch the movies. To help satisfy my desire to teach literature, I provide my students with a reading list. Those interested, may either do an oral report in class or individually with me or they may do a written composition in order to earn extra credit points. This past semester I was overwhelmed by the number of students who chose to do literary readings. In addition, students are able to earn extra credits points if they find articles concerning current events. In the spring of 1995, the French presidential election was a popular topic with students. I have also created foreign language conversation groups that are moderated by students who are native speakers of the language or are an advanced level

student. Students attend a conversation group at least once a week for a half hour period. During the conversation group, they work on weekly class skits where they are provided with peer feedback and build confidence in their speaking abilities. At the end of each semester, a dinner is held for each of the foreign languages offered.[3] Students are divided into working groups of three to four students. Each group is given a recipe in the target language and are asked to prepare that part of the meal for the dinner. When we did the French dinner, for example, students were made aware of the differences between how the courses are served in the United States and France, the differences in table manners, and the fact that France uses the metric system. Plans are currently underway to develop foreign language clubs and a chapter of Alpha Mu Gamma at PCT&S. This national honor society would recognize students who had successfully achieve an A in two or more foreign language classes. Since PCT&S does not offer a major in any of the foreign languages, I am hoping that the development of foreign language clubs and of a chapter of Alpha Mu Gamma will increase the number of students who minor in a foreign language. Presently, the only major that requires students to take more than the school's requirement of two semesters of a foreign language and/or Area Studies is International Business. International Business majors must take an additional three semesters and are the largest population of students who minor in a foreign language. My wish is to make a minor in a foreign language popular with other majors, such as Fashion Design, Physician's Assistant, and Architecture. As part of this effort,

I have agreed, upon the request of my school's administration, to accompany a group of students to Cannes, France in July of 1996. The students will attend a four week summer program with the American Institute of Foreign Study (AIFS). PCT&S wants me to oversee the program, especially as many of the students have never travelled outside the United States and/or come from families that have never travelled outside the United States.

My big future project is the improvement of PCT&S's Language and Culture Center. In support of this project, the college administration has granted the foreign language program a graduate assistant. The graduate assistant, a M.S. candidate in Instructional Technology, assists me in the development of text-specific software, such as that which was developed to accompany French in Action, our French text for the first two semesters. The graduate assistant also ensures that all the Center's computers are functioning properly (the Center currently houses three IBM and five Macintosh computers). In addition, commercially made text-specific software is in use to accompany Destinos, our Spanish text for the first two semesters. Système D and Atajo, French and Spanish word-processing programs, are also available to students so that they may complete their out-of-class journals. These two word-processing programs have proven to be extremely successful: students truly enjoy working with them and consequently the quality of their writing has increased ten-fold Power Japanese helps students to learn the Japanese characters. I am now in search of German and Italian software programs.

In conclusion, the foreign language program and my professional experience continue to be in their growing stages. After only two and a half years at PCT&S, the foreign language program now offers five semesters of French, four semesters of Spanish and two semesters of German, Japanese, and Italian. Furthermore, due to the success that I have thus far achieved, I am pleased to report that foreign language program does figure prominently in PCT&S's ten year academic plan and that the Middle States accreditation task forces are giving careful and detailed attention to the needs of the foreign language program. Indeed, nationwide, foreign language programs are shifting gears in order to adapt to the needs of professionally oriented students and I consider myself fortunate to be at the forefront of a successful professionally oriented foreign language program. It is therefore extremely imperative that graduate schools prepared students for the realities of the current job market.

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[1]Alice Kaplan, French Lessons: A Memoir (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993) 166.

[2]Please see appendix 1 for a complete list of goals achieved through participation in the "Spreading the Word" project. The following courses are offered under the rubric of Area Studies: Contemporary Europe, East Asia, Africa, and Latin American Civilization.

[3]PCT&S provides small grants of $50.00 for each foreign language dinner.

Eileen M. Angelini, PCT&S

Appendix 1

PCT&S Foreign Language Program
Action Plan
1994-1995

1.) Change College Studies policy - students must take sequenced levels to satisfy language - cannot take Spanish I and French I.

2.) Develop plan to introduce one-hour courses, especially for study abroad and travel programs - try to offer three in spring 1995.

3.) Develop plan for instructional technology - hardware and software

4.) Develop plan to deal with level 3 and 4 combined classes - look at our combined architecture studios as a model - create faculty compensation plan for combined courses

5.) Develop plan to effectively utilize graduate assistants in the Language and Culture Center

6.) Develop plan to deliver language instruction at off-campus sites.

7.) Develop plan for evening division - include credit instruction and one-hour culture courses.

8.) Consider increasing class size to 25.

Eileen M. Angelini, PCT&S

Appendix 2

Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science
School of General Studies

I.343: Professional French I
Fall 1995

Instructor: Dr. Eileen M. Angelini Class Meeting: MWF 9:05 a.m.
Learning Center (mornings) and R22 Ravenhill Mansion (afternoons)
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. - Noon, and by appointment
Telephone: X2799 (mornings) and X2613 (afternoons and voice mail)

Syllabus

Required Texts: 1.) French In Action, Capretz, Textbook and Workbook; Yale University Press, First Edition

2.) French In Action Audio Tapes - To be purchased in the library basement.

3.) Three-ring binder and IBM computer diskette for Reflection Journal

4.) Recommended: French-English Dictionary

Course Description: This course is designed to teach you pertinent vocabulary so that you will have a basic understanding of the language and so that you may interact comfortably while in a professional setting in the French-speaking world. Words, phrases and customs that are of particular interest to the professional person will be learned. The use of various media (i.e. video tapes, audio cassettes, and computers) will further enhance the classroom study. The course will be taught for the most part in French, will emphasize oral proficiency, and will review grammar at an elementary level. Course material will include aspects of French culture which have an influence on both communication and professional practices.

Prerequisite: Sophomore or Junior status

Objectives: 1.) The **French In Action** video program is designed to develop your oral and listening skills in the French language. Reading and writing will be encouraged to help build vocabulary and syntactic skills.

• **Video Tapes Collection**: Available in the library basement. The video for each lesson is a dramatized version of the text and an introduction to the material in the workbook. Each video is to be used a second time, independently by each student, after class to reinforce the acquisition process which is taking place. Play the video two minutes at a time to give you time to build up knowledge of the language at your own speed.

• Audio Tapes: Available in the library basement. The audio tapes **must** be used in conjunction with the workbook. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO SIGN IN AT THE AV CENTER DESK WHEN DOING ASSIGNMENTS IN THE LIBRARY.**

• French In Action Software Program: Available in the Language and Culture Center in ARC Room 305. Questions from the first eight chapters are reviewed in detail for student use. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO SIGN IN AT THE CENTER TABLE WHEN DOING ASSIGNMENTS IN THE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CENTER. PLEASE REFER TO THE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CENTER GUIDE BOOKLET FOR HELP WITH COMPUTER SOFTWARE OR LOOK FOR THE CENTER'S GRADUATE ASSISTANT DURING POSTED OFFICE HOURS.**

IMPORTANT: You cannot expect to do the required work for the course without frequent use of the video and audio cassettes.

2.) The use of the computer software program Lingua Rom II Software will assist you in improving your pronunciation skills through listening / repeating / listening.

• Lingua Rom II Software for French is available in the Language and Culture Center located in ARC Room 305. Assignments will be from: French Survival Manual and French Pronunciation. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO SIGN IN AT THE CENTER TABLE WHEN DOING ASSIGNMENTS IN THE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CENTER.**

Presentation of this material within a cultural and professional framework will lead you to achieve oral proficiency in both social and professional situations with some level of accuracy from the start.

3.) **Reflection Journal** (two parts):

a.) **Out-of-class:** Since you are new to learning French, I want to be aware of your learning process. This includes your frustrations, anxieties, and what works well for you. Since you are new to the language, I will allow English to be used in your out-of-class journal for the first three weeks. After the first three weeks, I will expect you to use French only. This journal will not be given a letter grade but is a required part of your grade (see grading policy below). I expect two to three entries in your journal per week. The objective of the journal is to help you learn French better and more easily and to help me help you achieve these goals. The journal will help you keep track of what you are learning and thinking on a weekly basis. **IMPORTANT: your out-of-class journal is to be completed using the "Système-D" word processing program on the IMB in the Language and Culture Center (ARC Room 305). PLEASE REMEMBER TO SIGN IN AT THE CENTER TABLE WHEN DOING ASSIGNMENTS IN THE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CENTER.**

b.) **In-class:** To be done at varied times during class and only in French. Since you are just beginning to learn French, I cannot expect you to write fluent French. Therefore, in your in-class journal, you may write lists of words or simply draw a picture to express your thoughts. Once again, this journal will not be given a letter grade but is a required part of your grade. The objective of this exercise is to have you think in French and **not** translate from English to French.

• Although both the out-of-class and in-class journals are for your and my eyes only, you will be asked to share some of your insights with the class. Therefore you must

bring the journal to class with you. Each entry must be dated. I recommend a three-ring binder with loose leaf paper and a divider to separate your two journals.

Homework: Homework will be turned in at each class meeting. No past-due homework will be accepted unless there is a very good excuse.

Attendance: Since only active participation is the key to the success of this highly interactive program, five points will be deducted from your final grade for each absence from a class session after the second week of classes. You will be allowed to have one unjustified absence after the second week of classes. However, if, on three occasions, you arrive late to class by more than five minutes, this constitutes an unjustified absence!

Quizzes: At least one quiz per chapter will be given. There will be **no** make-up quizzes.

Group Skits: Once a week, each student will present, with another classmate, a short skit on the material that has been covered during the week. Mandatory conversation groups in the Learning Center will help you prepare for your weekly skits. Conversation groups are Tuesday and Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. You are expected to go once a week for one half-hour session. It is best to attend a session with your skit partner. Please see me if you have any scheduling problems. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO SIGN IN WITH THE CONVERSATION GROUP LEADER.**

Midterm Exam: Two parts, oral and written.

Final Exam: Two parts, oral and written

Make-up Work Policy: If in extenuating circumstances any of the preceding assignments cannot be completed on time, you must inform me well in advance of the due date. If make-up work is to be allowed, it must be completed before the next regularly scheduled assignment and will be conducted at a time determined by me.

Grading Policy: Active Participation (includes journals & attendance) - 25%
Homework - 10%
Quizzes - 15%
Group Skits -10%
Midterm Exam - 15%
Final Exam - 25%

Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated! Any student caught will immediately receive an F on the homework, quiz, or exam in question and will be referred to the Student Conduct Committee for appropriate action.

IMPORTANT: If at any point in the semester you feel that you are falling behind or that you are struggling in any way, do not hesitate to come see me. Remember, I am here to help you and will do my best to find you a tutor through the Learning Center.